

**BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS MEETING
THE BALTIMORE CONSERVATORY & BOTANICAL GARDENS
DRUID HILL PARK AT GWYNNS FALLS PARKWAY
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2004**

President Gosson called the meeting to order at 8:40 p.m.

PRESENT

Tracy Gosson, President, Board of Recreation & Parks
Dean Harrison, Commissioner, Board of Recreation & Parks
Frederick Hopkins, Commissioner, Board of Recreation & Parks
Wendell Peters Rawlings, Commissioner, Board of Recreation & Parks
Samuel Rodriguez, Commissioner, Board of Recreation & Parks
Betty Woods, Secretary, Board of Recreation & Parks
Kimberley Flowers, Director, Department of Recreation & Parks
Connie Brown, Associate Director of Parks, Department of Recreation & Parks
Gennady Schwartz, Chief of Capital Projects, Department of Recreation & Parks
Steve Vassor, Leisure Service Manager, Department of Recreation & Parks
Yolanda Herbert, Director's Special Assistant, Department of Recreation & Parks
Kay Sibetta, Director of Partnerships, Department of Recreation & Parks

GUESTS

Lenny Miller, Member, Easterwood Boys Club
Phil Sherman, Member, Easterwood Boys Club
Bill Lewis, President, Easterwood Boys Club
Sam Wainwright, Citizen and Home Owner in the Easterwood Community
Denise Ferger, Observer

ABSENT

Martin Knott, Jr., Commissioner, Board of Recreation & Parks
Carolyn Wainwright, Commissioner, Board of Recreation & Parks
Roslyn Johnson, Associate Director of Recreation, Department of Recreation & Parks

KUDOS TO THE DEPARTMENT! President Gosson attended three separate events this past weekend in which the Department of Recreation and Parks was heavily involved: (1) Opening of the Park Heights Sports Complex; (2) Raven's Stadium for the Greening Project that took place in the Sharp-Leadenhall community; and (3) the Recreation and Parks booth at the Book Festival. All events were very impressive and President Gosson commended the Department for these excellent activities.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE AUGUST 25, 2004 MEETING: Commissioner Hopkins made a motion for approval of the Minutes; Commissioner Harrison seconded it; and approval was unanimous.

EASTERWOOD PARK NAMING ISSUE: Steps have been actively taken to effect the renaming of Easterwood Park to Senator Troy Brailey-Easterwood Park, by way of a City Council Hearing. Commissioner Knott attended this Hearing and testified that the Board of Recreation and Parks supports this name change. The reason members of the Easterwood Boys Club have come forward is that the original change was to have been “Senator Troy Brailey Park”, thereby losing the Easterwood Park identity. They took the issue to City Council, presented their views, and ultimately Easterwood Park was added to the original proposed name.

Solid camaraderie, a love of sports and lasting friendships were the foundation of this Club, which was formed in 1910, and has continued through the decades. They also described how popular this park has been, and how many famous athletes got their start playing on its many fields. In answer to questions, members emphatically stated that the “Easterwood Boys Club” name would not be included in the official designation, nor would the honorable name of the late Senator Troy Brailey be in any way denigrated. Both names would reflect honor from the other.

When this name change becomes official, there will be a proper ceremony of announcement. Both the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Easterwood Boys club will coordinate this event. They will also collaborate on the wording on the plaques that the Club wants to place inside the Recreation Center. Discussion is also underway to rename the Recreation Center, as well.

Commissioner Rawlings made the motion to recommend the name change to Senator Troy Brailey-Easterwood Park; Commissioner Harrison seconded the Motion; approval was unanimous.

REPORT ON LEISURE SERVICES – Steve Vassor, Leisure Services Manager, gave an account of the statistics involved this summer as follows: the Camp Baltimores’ (Fun Camps) closed on August 25th with 4,000 young people having been served; 1100 participated in the Mayor’s Math Challenge; trips were taken to a wide variety of special facilities and events, i.e. Maryland Science Center, the Aquarium; Orioles games, etc. Football practice started on September 5th, and After School programs started on September 10th.

Mr. Vassor was questioned as to the biggest challenges that he feels Recreation faces. His answer was concise...morale, money and maintenance. People are being asked to do more and more with very

little, which is demoralizing; there is an aging staff, and no replenishment; and maintenance continues to be a problem. The maintenance contract did not work out, so custodians are being hired and assigned to Centers. Otherwise, there are structural problems that all cost money, such as the asbestos flooring in many of the Centers. Removal of this flooring will cost an enormous amount of money that the Department just doesn't have. Mr. Vassor, however, credited Mrs. Flowers for her efforts in bringing funding to the forefront.

In answer to questioning as to those Centers attached to public schools, it was stated that maintenance problems are the responsibility of DPW's General Services. Capital Improvements, however, are the responsibility of our Department.

Mr. Vassor was thanked for his honesty and presentation.

GATEWAY TO GREEN PROGRAM - Mrs. Herbert outlined the program that is being patterned after the plan Chicago implemented in 1986 by way of a very sizeable donation from one of the owners of the Hyatt Hotel. The Department's mission is to not only beautify the gateways into the City, but to enhance the environment and upgrade some of the neighborhoods in which the gateways are located, thereby improving the quality of lives. Right now, the main focus will be on high traffic areas, i.e. Russell Street, Martin Luther King , Jr. Boulevard, etc. Small communities are working together in making site selections. Utilization of plant types that can survive, cost of sites, and maintenance of these sites, are all factors to be considered.

The Department's aim is to create a non-profit organization, if feasible, so that monies can be directly deposited. In the creation of a non-profit status, the Department is looking to develop a broader application that can cover a variety of Recreation and Parks efforts so that it will not be necessary to build an NFP arm for every project. Another primary aim is to enlist the partnership of sponsors, who would benefit by the signage to be located at the gateways, and would indicate the sponsor's name and support. It would be very good public relations for all concerned. Corporate sponsors would have to agree to a 3-year maintenance commitment.

The Board has been asked to assist the Department with ideas about fundraising, and attracting sponsors. They are also being asked to assist in the creation of a departmental non-profit organization. At present, there is a committee consisting of Mrs. Flowers, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Herbert who are working on this and endeavoring to identify 10 sites. President Gosson requested that she be included on this committee. Her involvement would be most welcome!

“MAKE IT BEAUTIFUL DAY” IN BALTIMORE – President Gosson has not only made a commitment to participate, but has pulled together a team to work with her, and plans to work on the Three Sisters Pond. She then challenged the rest of the Board to a contest...whoever can recruit the most people, (10 being the minimum), to work October 22nd or October 23rd, will get a prize. Everyone enthusiastically took up the challenge!

A “Believe in a Greener Baltimore” schedule of events was distributed to everyone. Mrs. Flowers stated that many options are available, and suggested that any information needed could be obtained by contacting Fran Spero, Director of Conservation and Community Outreach, at (410) 396-0339, or emailing her at fran.spero@baltimorecity.gov.

President Gosson requested that a summary be sent to the Board, so they have an idea of the complete itinerary of activities involved.

CONSERVATORY NAME CHANGE – The Baltimore Conservatory will most likely be renamed in honor of the late Honorable Howard “Pete” Rawlings, State Delegate, who worked long and hard to secure the State funding for the renovation of this unique facility. Mayor O’Malley will announce the name change at a later date. Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawlings will be attending the Department of Planning Hearing regarding this issue. The Grand Reopening of the Conservatory will be on Thursday, September 23, 2004.

B.E.E.F. REPORT - Mrs. Flowers informed everyone that the Baltimore Efficiency and Economy Foundation, Inc. (B.E.E.F.) did a study on the Department’s Aquatic Department, and made recommendations on how to streamline the operation. Tomorrow morning, at 8:30 a.m., she will be making a presentation to the B.E.E.F. Board, demonstrating how their recommendations have been put into effect. She extended an invitation to the Board to attend; otherwise, she will make the same presentation at the next Board of Recreation and Parks meeting on October 27th.

THANK YOU’S – Mrs. Flowers thanked President Gosson for her assistance in helping to expedite the incorporation of the Department’s website into the City’s website. She also expressed her appreciation to the entire Board for their enthusiastic and energetic commitment to the Department of Recreation and Parks.

NEXT MEETING/LOCATION – The next meeting of the Board of Recreation and Parks will be on Wednesday, October 27th, at 5:30 p.m. The Board selected the Clarence “Du” Burns Soccer Arena, on Ellwood and Boston Streets in Canton as their meeting location.

ADJOURNMENT – President Gosson adjourned the meeting at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Betty M. Woods, Secretary to the Board